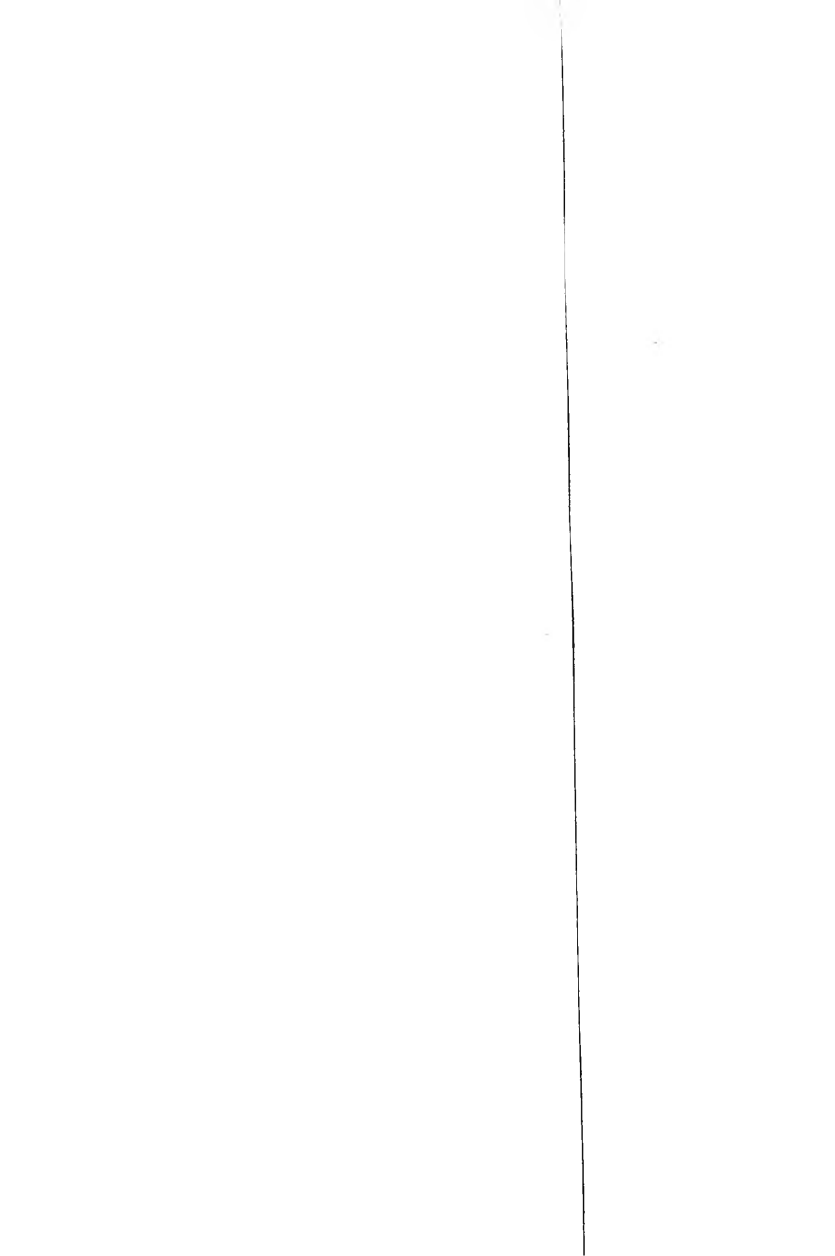


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IS SLAVERY CONSISTENT WITH NATURAL LAW?

AN ADDRESS DELIVERED BEFORE THE VIRGINIA STATE AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY, AT THE SIXTH ANNUAL EXHIBITION, AT PETERSBURG, 4TH NOVEMBER, 1858.

BY JAMES P. HOLCOMBE.

Mr. President, and

Gentlemen of the Agricultural Society:

It seems to me eminently proper, to connect with these imposing exhibitions of the trophies of your agricultural skill, a discussion of the whole bearings and relations, jural, moral, social, and economical, of that peculiar industrial system to which we are so largely indebted for the results that have awakened our pride and gratification. No class in the community has so many and such large interests gathered up in the safety and permanence of that system, as the Farmers of the State. The main-wheel and spring of your material prosperity, interwoven with the entire texture of your social life, underlying the very foundations of the public strength and renown, to lay upon it any rash hand would put in peril whatever you value: the security of your property, the peace of your society, the well-being—if not the existence of that dependent race which Providence has committed to your guardianship—the stability of your government, the preservation in your midst of union, liberty, and civilization. By the introduction of elements of such inexpressible magnitude, the politics of our country have been invested with the grandeur and significance which belong to those great struggles upon which depend the

destinies of nations. The mad outbreaks of popular passion, the rapid spread of anarchical opinions, the mournful decay of ancient patriotism, the wide disruption of Christian unity, which have marked the progress, and disclosed the power, purpose and spirit of this agitation, come home to your business and bosoms with impressive emphasis of warning and instruction. No pause in a strife around which cluster all the hopes and fears of freemen, can give any earnest of enduring peace, until the principles of law and order which cover with sustaining sanction all the relations of our society, have obtained their rightful ascendancy over the reason and conscience of the Christian world.

The most instructive chapters in history are those of opinions. The decisive battle-fields of the world, furnish but vulgar and deceptive indices of human progress. Its true eras are marked by transitions of sentiment and opinion. Those invisible moral forces that emanate from the minds of the great thinkers of the race, rule the courses of history. The recent awakening of our Southern mind upon the question of African Slavery, has been followed by a victory of peace, which we trust, will embrace within its beneficent influence generations and empires yet unborn. Such was the strength of anti-

slavery feeling within our own borders, that scarcely a quarter of a century has elapsed since an Act of Emancipation was almost consummated, under the auspices of our most intelligent and patriotic citizens; a measure which probably all would now admit bore in its womb elements of private distress and public calamity, that must have impressed upon our history, through ages of expanding desolation, the lines of fire and blood. But

“Whirlwinds fittest scatter pestilence.”

Nothing less than an extremity of peril could have induced a general revision of long-standing opinions, entrenched in formidable prejudices, and sanctioned by the most venerable authority. Slavery was explored, for the first time, with the forward and reverted eye of true statesmanship, under all the lights of history—of social and political philosophy—of natural and Divine law. Public sentiment rapidly changed its face. Every year of controversy has encouraged the advocates of “discountenanced truth” by the fresh accessions it has brought to their numbers, whilst no desertions have thinned the enlarging ranks. The celebrated declaration of Mr. Jefferson, that he knew no attribute of the Almighty which would take the side of the master in a contest with his slave, is so far from commanding the assent of the intelligent slaveholders of this generation, that the justice, the humanity, and the policy of the relation as it exists with us, has become the prevailing conviction of our people. Public honours, and gratitude, are the fitting meed of the statesmen, whether living or dead, (and amongst them I recall no names more eminent than those associated with the proudest traditions of this hospitable and patriotic city, Leigh, Gholson, and Brown,) who threw themselves into this imminent and deadly breach, and grappling with an uninformed and unreflecting sentiment, delivered the commonwealth, when in the very jaws of death, from moral, social and political ruin.

Permit me to premise some words of explanation as to the meaning and extent

of the subject upon which I have been invited to address this meeting. It presents no question of municipal or international law. It raises no inquiry as to the rightfulness of the means by which slavery was introduced into this continent, nor into the nature of the legal sanctions under which it now exists. There can be no doubt that slavery, for more than a century after it was established in the English colonies, was in entire harmony with the Common Law, as it was expounded by the highest judicial authorities, and with the principles of the Law of Nations, and of Natural Law as laid down in the writings of the most eminent publicists. At the commencement of our Revolution men were living who remembered the Treaty of Utrecht, by which, in the language of Lord Brougham, all the glories of Ramillies and Blenheim were bartered for a larger share in the lucrative commerce of the slave trade. But whatever may be our present opinions upon these subjects, the black race now constitutes an integral part of our community, as much so as the white, and the authority of the State to adjust their mutual relations can in no manner depend upon the method by which either was brought within its jurisdiction. The State in every age must provide a constitution and laws, if it does not find them in existence, adapted to its special wants and circumstances. African Slavery in the United States is consistent with Natural Law, because if all the bonds of public authority were suddenly dissolved, and the community called upon to reconstruct its social and political system, the relations of the two races remaining in other respects unaltered, it would be our right and duty to reduce the negro to subjection. To the phrase Natural Law, I shall attach in this discussion the signification in which it is generally used, and consider it as synonymous with justice; not that imperfect justice which may be discerned by the savage mind, but those ethical rules, or principles of right, which, upon the grounds of their own fitness and propriety, and irrespective of the sanction of Divine authority, commend themselves to the most cultivated human reason.



Slavery we may define, so as to embrace all the elements that properly belong to it, as a condition or relation in which one man is charged with the protection and support of another, and invested with an absolute property in his labour, and such a degree of authority over his person as may be requisite to enforce its enjoyment. It is a form of involuntary restraint, extending to the personal as well as political liberty of the subject. The slave has sometimes, as at one period under the Roman jurisprudence, been reduced to a mere chattel, the power of the master over the person of the slave being as absolute as his property in his labour. This harsh and unnatural feature has never deformed the relation in any Christian country. In the United States the double character of the slave, as a moral person and as a subject of property, has been universally acknowledged, and to a greater or less degree protected, both by public sentiment and by the law of the land. It furnishes a key to the understanding of one of the most celebrated clauses in our Federal Constitution, as all know who are familiar with the luminous exposition, given by Mr. Madison in the *Federalist*, of its origin and meaning. In our own State, amongst other proofs of its recognition, we may point to the privilege conferred upon the master of emancipating his slave, and to the obligation imposed upon him of providing for his support when old, infirm, or insane; to the enactments which punish injuries to the slave, whether from a master or stranger, as offences of the same nature as if inflicted upon a white person, and to the construction placed by our courts upon the general language of criminal statutes, by which the slave, as a person, has been embraced within the range of their protection; to the regulations for the trial of slaves charged with the commission of crime, which, whilst they exact the responsibilities of moral agents, temper the administration of justice with mercy, and to the exemption from labour on the Lord's Day, an exemption which is shown by the provision for the Christian slave of a Jewish master, to have been established as a security for a right of conscience.

Indeed, he scarcely labours under any personal disability, to which we may not find a counterpart, in those which attach to other incompetent classes—the minor, the lunatic, and the married woman.

The statement of my subject presupposes the existence of the State. It thus assumes that there are involuntary restraints which may be rightfully imposed upon men, for the State itself is but the sum and expression of innumerable forms of restraint by which the life, liberty, and faculties of individuals are placed under the control of an authority independent of their volition? The truth that the selfishness of human nature, forces upon us the necessity of submitting to the discipline of law, or living in the license of anarchy, is too obvious to have required any argument in its support, in this presence. Until man becomes a law unto himself, society through a political organization must supply his want of self-control. Whether it may establish such a form of restraint, as personal slavery, cannot be determined until the principles upon which its authority should be exercised, have been settled, and the boundaries traced between private right and public power. The authority of the State must be commensurate with the objects for which it was established. Its function is, to reconcile the conflicting rights, and opposing interests, and jarring passions of individuals, so as to secure the general peace and progress. It proceeds upon the postulate, that society is our state of nature, and that men by the primary law of their being, are bound to live and perfect themselves in fellowship with each other. As God does not ordain contradictory and therefore impossible things, men can derive no rights from him which are inconsistent with the duration and perfection of society. The rights of the individual are not such as would belong to him, if he stood upon the earth like Campbell's imaginary "Last Man," amidst unbroken solitude, but such only as when balanced with the equal rights of other men, may be accorded to each, without injury to the rest. The necessities of social existence, then, not in the

rudeness of the savage state, but under those complex and refined forms which have been developed by Christian civilization, constitute a horizon by which the unbounded liberty of nature is spanned and circumscribed.

This is no theory of social absolutism. It does not make society the source of our rights, which therefore might be conferred or withheld at its caprice or discretion, but it does regard the just wants of society, as the measure and practical expression of their extent. It is no reproduction of the exploded error of the ancient statesmen, who inverting the natural relations of the parties, considered the aggrandizement of the State, without reference to the units of which it was composed, as the end of social union. The State was made for man, and not man for the State, but the coöperation of the State is yet so necessary to the perfection of his nature, that his interests require the renunciation of any claim inconsistent with its existence, or its value as an agency of civilization. It invades no province sacred to the individual, because the Divine Being who has rendered government a necessity, has made it a universal blessing, by ordaining a præestablished harmony between the welfare of the individual and the restraints which are requisite to the well-being of society.

Unless there is some fatal flaw in this reasoning, men have no rights which cannot be reconciled with the possession of a restraining power by the State, large enough to embrace every variety of injustice and oppression, for which society may furnish the occasion or the opportunity. The social union brings with it dangers and temptations, as well as blessings and pleasures—and men cannot fulfil the law and purpose of their being, unless the State has authority to protect the community from the tumultuous and outbreking passions of its members, and to protect individuals as far as it can be accomplished without prejudice to the community from the consequences of their own incompetence, improvidence and folly. Such are the natural differences between men in char-

acter and capacity, that without a steady and judicious effort by the State to redress the balance of privilege and opportunity which these inequalities constantly derange, the rich must grow richer, and the poor poorer, until even anarchy would be a relief to the masses, from the suffering and oppression of society. Owing likewise to this variety of condition, and of moral and intellectual endowment, it is impossible to prescribe any stereotype forms admitting of universal application, under which the restraining discipline of law should be exercised. The ends of social union remain the same through all ages, but the means of realizing those ends must be adapted to successive stages of advancement, and change with the varying intelligence and virtue of individuals, and classes, and races, and the local circumstances of different countries. The object being supreme in importance must carry with it as an incident, the right to employ the means which may be requisite to its attainment. The individual must yield property, liberty, life itself when necessary to preserve the life, as it were, of the collective humanity. To these principles, every enlightened government in the world, conforms its practice, protecting men not only from each other, but from themselves, graduating its restraints according to the character of the subject, and multiplying them with the increase of society in wealth, population and refinement. We cannot look into English or American jurisprudence without discovering innumerable forms of restraint upon rights of persons as well as rights of property, as in that absolute subordination of all personal rights to the general welfare, which lies at the foundation of the law for the public defence, the law to punish crimes, and the law to suppress vagrancy: or in those qualified restraints by which the administration of justice between individuals, has been sometimes enforced, as in imprisonment for debt: or in that partial and temporary subjection of one person to the control of another, either for the benefit of the former, or upon grounds of public policy, presented in the law of

parent and child, guardian and ward, master and apprentice, lunatic and committee, husband and wife, officer and soldiers of the army, captain and mariners of the ship. Whether we proceed in search of a general principle, which may ascertain the extent of the public authority by a course of inductive reasoning, or by an observation of the practice of civilized communities, we reach the same conclusion. The State must possess the power of imposing any restraint without regard to its form, which can be shown by an enlarged view of social expediency, or upon an indulgent consideration for human infirmity, to be beneficial to its subject, or necessary to the general well-being.

In the legislation of Congress for the Indian tribes within our territory, and in that of Great Britain for the alien and dependent nations under her jurisdiction, we see how the public authority, as flexible as comprehensive in its grasp, accommodates itself to the weakness and infirmity of races, as well as of individuals. Upon what principles is the British government administered in the East? In 1833, on the application of the East India Company for a renewal of its charter, they were explained and defended by Macaulay in a speech which would have delighted Burke, as much by its practical wisdom, as its glittering rhetoric. An immense society was placed under the almost despotic rule of a few strangers. No securities were provided for liberty or property, which an Englishman would have valued. This system of servitude was vindicated, not on the grounds of abstract propriety, but of its adaptation to the wants and circumstances of those upon whom it was imposed. India, it was urged, constituted a vast exception to all those general rules of political science which might be deduced from the experience of Europe. Her population was disqualified by character and habit, for the rights and privileges of British freemen. In their moral and social amelioration, under British rule, was to be found the best proof of its justice and policy. It was a despotism no doubt, but it was a mild and paternal one; and no form of restraint less stringent could be

substituted with equal advantage to those upon whom it was to operate. It has often occurred to me in reading those fervid declamations upon Southern slavery, with which this great orator has inflamed the sensibilities of the British public, that his lessons of sober and practical statesmanship, from which no English ministry has ever departed, might be turned with irresistible recoil upon their author. Was American slavery introduced by wrong and violence? India was "stripped of her plumed and jewelled turban," by rapine and injustice. Are the relations of England to India, so anomalous that it would be unsafe to accept generalizations drawn from the experience of other communities? History might be interrogated in vain, for a parallel to the condition of our Southern society. Are the Hindoos unfit for liberty? Not more so than the African. Is despotism necessary in India, because it is problematical whether crime could be repressed, or social order preserved under more liberal institutions? The danger of license and anarchy would be far more imminent, from an emancipation of our slaves. If the statesman despairs of making brick without straw in the East, can he expect to find the problem easier in the West? Has the Hindoo improved in arts and morals under the beneficent sway of his British master? In the transformation of the African savage into the Christian slave, the relative advance has been immeasurably greater. The truth is, that the principles which lie at the foundation of all political restraint, may make it the duty of the State under certain circumstances, to establish the relation of personal servitude. All forms of restraint involve the exercise of power over the individual without his consent. All are inconsistent with any theory of natural right which claims for man, a larger measure of liberty than can be reconciled with the peace and progress of the society in which he lives. All operate harshly at times upon individuals. All are reflections upon human nature, and alike wrong in the abstract. Any is right in the concrete, when necessary to the welfare of the community in which it exists, or beneficial to the sub-

ject upon whom it is imposed. If society may establish the institution of private property, involving restrictions by which the majority of mankind are shut out from all access to that great domain which the author of nature has stocked with the means of subsistence for his children, and justify a restraint so comprehensive and onerous, by its tendency to promote civilization; if it may discriminate between classes and individuals, and apportion to some a larger measure of political liberty than it does to others; if it may take away life, liberty or property when demanded by the public good: if, as in various personal relations, it may protect the helpless and incompetent, by placing them under a guardianship proportioned in the term and extent of its authority to the degree and duration of the infirmity; why if a commensurate necessity arises, and the same great ends are to be accomplished, is its claim to impose upon an inferior race the degree of personal restraint which may be requisite to coerce and direct its labour, to be treated as a usurpation? The authority of the State under proper circumstances to establish a system of slavery, is one question; the existence of those circumstances, or the expediency of such legislation is another and entirely distinct question. No doubt a much smaller capacity for self-control, and a much lower degree of intelligence must concur, to justify personal slavery, than would be sufficient to impart validity to other forms of subordination. No doubt the public authority upon this as upon every other subject, may be abused by the selfish passions and interests of men. But once acknowledge the right of society to establish a government of pains and penalties, for the protection of the individual and the promotion of the general welfare, then unless it can be shown that slavery can in no instance be necessary to the well being of the community, or conducive to the happiness of the subject, (a proposition which is inconsistent with the admission of all respectable British and American abolitionists that any plan of emancipation in the Southern States, should be gradual and not immediate;) once make this fundamental con-

cession, and the rightfulness of slavery, like that of every other form of restraint, becomes a question of time, place, men and circumstances.

The people of the United States accepting without much reflection, those expositions of human rights embodied in the infidel philosophy of France, and glowing with that generous enthusiasm to communicate the blessings of liberty which is always inspired by its possession, have been disposed to look with common aversion upon all forms of unequal restraint. Ravished by the divine airs of their own freedom, they have imagined that its strains, like those heard by the spirit in Comus, might create a soul under the ribs of death. Forgetting the ages through whose long night their fathers wrestled for this blessing, they have regarded an equal liberty, as the universal birth-right of humanity. Hence, as they have witnessed nation after nation throwing off its old political bondage, and in the first transports of emotion, "shedding the grateful tears of new-born freedom" over the broken chains of servitude, they have welcomed them into the glorious fellowship of republican States, with plaudit, and sympathy, and benediction. But, alas! the crimes which have been committed in the name of liberty, the social disorder and political convulsion which have attended its progress, if they have not broken the power of its spells over the heart, have dispersed the illusions of our understanding. What has become of France, Italy, Greece, Mexico, Spanish America? that stately fleet of freedom, which when first launched upon the seas of time, with all its bravery on, was "courted by every wind that held it play." A part has been swallowed up in the gulfs of anarchy and despotism—the rest still float above the wave, but with rudder and anchor gone, stripped of every bellying sail and steady spar, they only serve,

"Like ocean wrecks, to illuminate the storm."

The melancholy experience of both hemispheres has compelled all but the projectors of revolution to acknowledge,

that the forms of liberty are valueless without its spirit, and that an attempt to outstrip the march of Providence, by conferring it on a people unprepared for its enjoyments by habit, tradition, or character, is an indescribable folly—which instead of establishing peace, order, and justice, will be more likely to inaugurate a reign of terror and crime in which civilization itself may perish.

If the justice or fitness of slavery is to be determined, like other forms of involuntary restraint, not by speculative abstractions, but by reference to its adaptation to the wants and circumstances of the community in which it is established, and especially of the people over whom it is imposed, it only remains that we should apply these principles to the question of African Slavery in the United States. I shall not defend it as the only relation between the races, in which the superior can preserve the civilization that renders life dear and valuable. This proposition can indeed be demonstrated by plenary evidence, and it is sufficient by itself to acquit the slaveholder of all guilt in the eye of morals. But if the system could be vindicated upon no higher ground, every generous spirit would grieve over the mournful necessity which rendered the degradation of the black man indispensable to the advancement of the white. Providence has condemned us to no such cruel and unhappy fate. The relation in our society is demanded by the highest and most enduring interests of the slave, as well as the master. It exists and must be preserved for the benefit of both parties. Duty is indeed the tenure of the master's right. Upon him there rests a moral obligation to make such provision for the comfort of the slave, as after proper consideration of the burthens and casualties of the service, can be deemed a fair compensation for his labour; to allow every innocent gratification compatible with the steady, though mild discipline, as necessary to the happiness as the value of the slave; to furnish the means and facilities for religious instruction; and to contribute, as far and fast as a proper regard to the public safety will permit, to his

general elevation and improvement. For oppression or injustice, allow me to say, I have no excuse to offer. I am willing to accept the sentiment of the heathen philosopher, and to regard a man's treatment of his slaves as a test of his virtue. And whenever a slaveholder is found who so far forgets the sentiments of humanity, the feelings of the gentleman, and the principles of the Christian, as to abuse the authority which the law gives him over his slaves, I trust that a righteous and avenging public sentiment will pursue him with the scorn and degradation which attend the husband or father, who by cruel usage makes home intolerable to wife or child.

Personal and political liberty are both requisite to develop the highest style of man. They furnish the amplest opportunities for the exercise of that self-control which is the germ and essence of every virtue, and for that expansive and ameliorating culture by which our whole nature is exalted in the scale of being, and clothed with the grace, dignity and authority, becoming the lords of creation. Whenever the population of a State is homogeneous, although slavery may perform some important functions in quickening the otherwise tardy processes of civilization, it ought to be regarded as a temporary and provisional relation. If there are no radical differences of physical organization or moral character, the barriers between classes are not insurmountable. The discipline of education and liberal institutions, may raise the serf to the level of the baron. Against any artificial circumscription seeking to arrest that tendency to freedom which is the normal state of every society of equals, human nature would constantly rise in rebellion. But where two distinct races are collected upon the same territory, incapable from any cause of fusion or severance, the one being as much superior to the other in strength and intelligence as the man to the child, there the rightful relation between them is that of authority upon the one side, and subordination in some form, upon the other. Equality, personal and political, could not be established without inflicting the

climax of injustice upon the superior, and of cruelty on the inferior race: for if it were possible to preserve such an arrangement, it would wrest the sceptre of dominion from the wisdom and strength of society, and surrender it to its weakness and folly. "Of all rights of man," says Carlyle, "the right of the ignorant man to be guided by the wiser, to be gently and firmly held in the true course, is the indispensablest. Nature has ordained it from the first. Society struggles towards perfection by conforming to and accomplishing it, more and more. If freedom have any meaning, it means enjoyment of this right, in which all other rights are enjoyed. It is a divine right and duty on both sides, and the sum of all social duties between the two." Under the circumstances I have supposed, no intelligent man could hesitate, except as to the form of subordination: nor has entire equality been ever allowed in society where the inferior race constituted an element of any magnitude.

Personal servitude is generally the harshest and most objectionable form of restraint, exposing its subjects to an abuse of power involving greater suffering than any other. But this is not an invariable law, even in a homogeneous society. The most recent researches into the condition of the labouring classes of Europe, the descendants of the emancipated serfs, have satisfied all candid inquirers after truth that a large number have sunk below the level of their ancient slavery, and would be thankful to belong to any master who would furnish them with food, clothing and shelter. But when we are settling the law of a society embracing in its bosom distinct and unequal races, the problem is complicated by elements which create the gravest doubt whether personal liberty will prove a blessing or a curse. It may become a question between the slavery, and the extinction or further deterioration of the inferior race. Thus, if it is difficult to procure the means of subsistence from density of population or other cause, and if the inferior race is incapable of sustaining a competition with the

superior in the industrial pursuits of life, a condition of freedom which would involve such competition, must either terminate in its destruction, or consign it to hopeless degradation. If, under these circumstances, a system of personal servitude gave reasonable assurance of preserving the inferior race, and gradually imparting to it the amelioration of a higher civilization, no Christian statesman could mistake the path of duty. Natural law, illuminated in its decision by History, Philosophy, and Religion, would not only clothe the relation with the sanction of justice, but lend to it the lustre of mercy. It will not, I apprehend, be difficult to show that all the conditions apply to African slavery in the United States. Look at the races which have been brought face to face in unmanageable masses, upon this continent, and it is impossible to mistake their relative position. The one still filling that humble and subordinate place, which as the pictured monuments of Egypt attest, it has occupied since the dawn of history; a race which during the long-revolving cycles of intervening time has founded no empire, built no towered city, invented no art, discovered no truth, bequeathed no everlasting possession to the future, through law-giver, hero, bard, or benefactor of mankind: a race which, though lifted immeasurably above its native barbarism by the refining influence of Christian servitude has yet given no signs of living and self-sustaining culture. The other, a great composite race which has incorporated into its bosom all the vital elements of human progress; which, crowned with the traditions of history and bearing in its hands the most precious trophies of civilization, still rejoices in the overflowing energy, the abounding strength, the unconquerable will which have made it "the heir of all the ages;" and which with aspirations unsatisfied by centuries of toil and achievement, still vexes sea and land with its busy industry, binds coy nature faster in its chains, embellishes life more prodigally with its arts, kindles a wider inspiration from the fountain lights of freedom, follows knowledge

“like a sinking star,
Beyond the utmost bound of human
thought,”

and pushing its unresting columns still further into the regions of eldest Night, in lands more remote than any over which Roman eagles ever flew, “to the farthest verge of the green earth,” plants the conquering banner of the Cross,

“Encircling continents and oceans vast,
In one humanity.”

It is impossible to believe that the supremacy in which the Caucasian has towered over the African through all the past can be shaken, or that the black man can ever successfully dispute the preëminence with his white brother as members of the same community, in the arts and business of life. Could such races be mated with each other? It is unnecessary to refer to Egypt or Central America, where a mongrel population, *monumenta veneris nefandæ*, exhibit the deteriorating influence of a similar fusion. If there were no broad and indelible dividing lines of colour and physical organization to keep the black and white races apart, their respective traditions, extremes of moral and intellectual advancement, and unequal aptitudes, if not capacities for higher civilization, separate them by an impassible gulf. That feeble remnant of our kindred, who, surrounded by hordes of barbarians, yet linger among the deserted seats of West India civilization, may forget the dignity of Anglo-Saxon manhood, in the despair and poverty to which they have been reduced by British injustice; but we, “sprung of earth’s first blood,” and “foremost in the files of time,” who under Providence are masters of our destiny, will never permit the generations of American history to be bound together by links of shame. Is the deportation of the African race practicable? A more extravagant project was never seriously entertained by the human understanding. There are economical considerations alone, which would render it utterly hopeless. The removal of our

black population would create a gap in the industry of the world, which no white emigration could fill. It would bring over the general prosperity of the country a blight and ruin, that would dry up all the sources of revenue on which the success of the measure would depend. Its consequences would not terminate with this continent. The great wheel which moves the commerce and manufactures of the world, would be arrested in its revolutions. General bankruptcy would follow a shock, besides which the accumulated financial crises of centuries would be unfelt. In the recklessness and despair of crime and famine thus induced, the ancient landmarks of empire might be disturbed, and all existing governments shaken to their foundation. No favourable inference can be drawn from the immense emigration, which, like the swell of a mighty sea, is pouring upon our shores. It comes from regions where population is too dense for subsistence, and where a vacant space is closed as soon as it is opened. It is impelled by double influences, neither of which can operate to any extent upon the American slave, want and wretchedness at home, and all material and moral attractions abroad. It is composed of men accustomed at least to personal freedom, and belonging to races endowed with far more energy and intelligence than the African. It is received into a community, whose strength and vitality enable it to absorb and assimilate a much larger foreign element than any of which history has any record. If the black man was able and willing to return to his native land, he must carry with him the habits and feelings of the slave. Can it be supposed that such a living cloud, as the annual increase of our slaves, could discharge its contents into the bosom of any African society, without blighting in the license of their first emancipation from all restraint, whatever promise of civilization it might have held out?

If we must accept the permanent residence of this race upon our soil, as a providential arrangement beyond human control, it only remains to adjust the

form of its subordination. Should it embrace personal, as well as political servitude? Personal slavery surrounds the black man with a protection and salutary control which his own reason and energies are incapable of supplying, and by converting elements of destruction into sources of progress, promotes his physical comfort, his intellectual culture, and his moral amelioration. Emancipation upon the other hand in any form, gradual or immediate, would either destroy the race through a wasting process of poverty, vice, and crime, or sink it into an irrecoverable deep of savage degradation. What Homer has said may be true, that a free man loses half his value the day he becomes a slave; but it is quite as true, that the slave who is converted into a freeman, is more likely to lose the remaining half than to recover what is gone. There are no rational grounds upon which we could anticipate for our slaves, an advancing civilization if they were emancipated, or upon which we could expect them to preserve their contented temper, their material comfort, their industrious habits, and their general morality. The negro has learned much in contact with the white man, but he is yet ignorant of that great art which is the guardian of all acquisition, the art of self-government. The superiority of the white man in skill, energy, foresight, providence, aptitude for improvement, and control over the lower appetites and passions, would give him a decisive and fatal advantage in the pitiless competition of life. The light which history sheds around this problem, is broad and unchanging. Wherever unequal races are brought together, unless reduced by despotism to an indiscriminate servitude, or mingled by a deteriorating and demoralizing fusion, the inferior must choose between slavery and extinction. Upon these principles only can we explain the preservation of the Indian inhabitants of Spanish America, and the destruction of the aboriginal races which have crossed the path of English colonization. All the lower stages of civilization are characterized by an improvidence of

the future and a predominance of the animal nature, which increase the force of temptation, and at the same time diminish the power of resistance. Hence it is, that when an inferior race, animated by the passions of the savage, but destitute of the restraining self-control which is developed by civilization, is brought in contact with a higher form of social existence, where the stimulants and facilities for sensual gratification are multiplied, and the consequences of excess and improvidence are aggravated in fatality, it is mown down by a mortality more terrific than the widest waste of war. Private charity and the influence of Christianity upon individuals may retard the operation of these causes, but destruction is only a question of time. Without a judicious husbandry of the surplus proceeds of labour in the day of prosperity to meet the demands of age, sickness and casualty, poverty alone with the disease, suffering and crime that attend it, would wear out any labouring population. The remnant of the Indian tribes scattered along the lower banks of the St. Lawrence, present an impressive illustration of these simple political truths. They manifest, says Professor Bowen, sufficient industry when the reward of labour is immediate: but surrounded by an abundance of fertile and cleared land, where others would grow rich, they are rapidly perishing from improvidence alone.

Even in England, in periods of manufacturing prosperity, when wages are high, the Chancellor of the Exchequer reckons with as much confidence upon the expenditure by the operatives of their surplus profits, in spirits, tobacco, and other hurtful stimulants, as upon the proceeds of the income tax. And if the working class of England, instead of being constantly recruited from a higher order of society, consisted of an inferior race, the annual losses from intemperance and improvidence would soon carry it off. As population becomes denser, our free blacks are destined to exemplify the same great law. In the free States, where an encroaching tide of white emigration is driving them from one field of industry after an-

other, they already stand, as the statistics of population, disease and crime disclose, upon the narrowest isthmus which can divide life from death. When we remember that the destructive agencies which would be let loose amongst our slaves, by emancipation, are as fatal to morals as to life, and that the natural inequality between the races would be increased by a constant accession of numbers to the white through emigration, it is not extravagant to assert that exterminating massacre would involve a swifter, but scarcely more certain or more cruel death.

If emancipation took place in a tropical region, where climate forbade the competition of white labour, and the exuberance of nature supplied the means of life without the necessity of intelligent and systematic industry, there are other causes which would remove from the slave every safeguard of progress, and render his relapse into barbarism inevitable. Civilization depends upon activity, development, progress. It is measured by our wants and our work. Without indulging in any rash generalizations, we may safely affirm, that where animal life can be sustained without labour, and an enervating climate invites to indolent repose, we cannot expect from that class of society upon whom in every country the cultivation of the soil depends, any industrious emulation. So powerful is the influence of these physical causes over barbarous tribes, that under the torrid zone, as we are informed by Humboldt, where a beneficent hand has profusely scattered the seeds of abundance, indolent and improvident man experiences periodically a want of subsistence which is unfelt in the sterile regions of the North. As men increase in virtue and intelligence, they become more capable of resisting the operation of climate and other natural laws, but some form of slavery has been the only basis upon which civilization has yet rested in any tropical country. If it can be sustained upon any other, it must be by a race endowed with a larger fund of native energy than the African, or quickened by the electric power of a higher

culture than he has ever possessed. His moral and physical conformation predispose him to indolence. *Colum non animum mutant*, has been the law of his history. Under the *Code Rural* of Hayti, the harshest compulsion has been used to subdue the sloth of barbarism, and to compel the labour of the free black man, but in vain. In the British West Indies, since emancipation, no expedients have proven effectual to conquer this repugnance to exertion. The English historian, Alison, who whatever may be his political sentiments, has no sympathies with slavery, in his last volume, thus describes the result of the experiment. "But disastrous as the results of the change have been to British interests both at home and in the West Indies, they are as nothing to those which have ensued to the negroes themselves, both in their native seats and the Trans-Atlantic Colonies. The fatal gift of premature emancipation has proved as pernicious to a race as it always does to an individual: the boy of seventeen sent out into the world, has continued a boy, and does as other boys do. The diminution of the agricultural exported produce of the islands to less than a half, proves how much their industry has declined. The reduction of the consumption of their British produce and manufactures in a similar proportion, tells unequivocally how much their means of comfort and enjoyment have fallen off. Generally speaking, the incipient civilization of the negro has been arrested by his emancipation: with the cessation of forced labour, the habits which spring from and compensate it, have disappeared, and savage habits and pleasures have resumed their ascendancy over the sable race. The attempts to instruct and civilize them have, for the most part, proved a failure; the *dolce far niente* equally dear to the unlettered savage as to the effeminate European, has resumed its sway; and the emancipated Africans dispersed in the woods, or in cabins erected amidst the ruined plantations, are fast relapsing into the state in which their ancestors were when first torn from their native seats by the rapacity of a Chris-

tian avarice." A melancholy confirmation of this statement is furnished by a fact which I have learned from a reliable private source, that the prevailing crimes of this population have changed from petty larceny to felonies of the highest grades. But if the black race could escape barbarism, or defy those destroying elements of society, poverty and crime, there is a more comprehensive political induction which establishes the justice and expediency of its subjection to servitude. If in any community there is an inferior race which is condemned by permanent and irresistible causes to occupy the condition of a working class, not as independent proprietors of the soil they till, but as labourers for hire, then a system of personal slavery under which the welfare of the slave could be connected with the interest of the master, would be far preferable to the collective servitude of a degraded caste. This proposition supposes the existence, not of an inferior class simply, but an inferior race—which, as such, is condemned by nature to wear the livery of servitude in some form—which can never be quickened or sustained by those animating prospects of wealth, dignity and power which, in a homogeneous community, pour a renovating stream of moral health through every vein and artery of social life—which must earn a scanty and precarious subsistence by a stern, unintermitting and unequal struggle with selfish capital. Can any skepticism resist the conviction that, under such circumstances, a social adjustment which would engage the selfish passions of the superior race to provide for the comfort of the inferior, must be an arrangement of mercy as well as of justice? Upon this question the experience of England is full of instruction. The abolition of slavery upon the continent of Europe gradually converted the original serfs into owners of the soil. In England, it terminated with personal manumission—leaving the villein to work as a labourer for wages, or to farm as a tenant upon lease. What has been the effect of this great social revolution? I do not refer to that saturnalia of poverty, misery, va-

grancy, and crime which immediately followed the disruption of the old feudal bonds, and the adjustment of the new relations of lord and vassal, by the "cold justice of the laws of political economy." What is the present condition of the English labourer? English writers, whose fidelity and accuracy are above suspicion, have almost exhausted the power of language in describing his abject wretchedness and squalid misery. They have distributed their population into the rich, the comfortable, the poor, and the perishing. That "bold peasantry, their country's pride," has almost disappeared. Every improvement in an industrial process which diminishes the amount of human labour, brings with it more or less of suffering to the English operative. Every scarce harvest, every fluctuation in trade, every financial crisis exposes him to beggary or starvation. In the selfish competition between the capitalist and workman, says a distinguished christian philanthropist, "the capitalist, whether farmer, merchant, or manufacturer, plays the game, wins all the high stakes, takes the lion's share of the profits, and throws all the losses, involving pauperism and despair, upon the masses." Nothing can be more hopeless than the condition of the agricultural labourer. All the life of England, says Bowen in his lectures on Political Economy, "is in her commercial and manufacturing classes. Outside of the city walls, we are in the middle ages again. There are the nobles and the serfs, true castes, for nothing short of a miracle can elevate or depress one who is born a member of either." Moral and intellectual culture cannot be connected with physical destitution and suffering. We are not therefore surprised to learn, from a recent British Quarterly, that there is an overwhelming class of outcasts at the bottom of their society whom the present system of popular education does not reach, who are below the influence of religious ordinances, and scarcely operated upon by any wholesome restraint of public opinion. For the relief of this wretchedness an immense pauper system has grown up, as grinding in its exactions upon the rich,

as demoralizing in its bounties to the poor. But even this frightful evil appears insignificant, in comparison with that embittered and widening feud between the classes of society, which has filled the most sanguine friends of human progress with the apprehension, that England's greatest danger may spring from the despair of her own children, the beggars who gaze in idleness and misery at her wealth, the savages who stand by the side of her civilization, and the heathen who have been nursed in the bosom of her Christianity. The intelligent philanthropists of England, place their whole hope of remedy in plans of colonization—plans for substituting coöperative associations for the system of hired service—plans for increasing the number of peasant proprietors, and thus placing labour on a more independent basis—for educating the working class, and for legislation which will facilitate the circulation of capital, and the more equal distribution of property. But if this evil working in the heart of the nation be incurable, if the helotism of the working classes should prove, as it has already been pronounced, irretrievable, I am far from advocating a reduction of the English labourer to slavery. There is no radical distinction of race, between the labourer and the capitalist. The latter owes his superiority, not to nature, but to the vantage ground of opportunity. Nature has implanted a consciousness of equality, so deeply in the bosom of the labourer, that personal slavery would bring with it a sense of degradation he could never endure. Whatever the general destitution and sufferings of his class, an undying hope will ever whisper to the individual that a happy fortune may raise him to comfortable independence, or social consideration. The very thought, that from his loins may spring some stately figure to tread, with dignity the shining eminences of life, is able to alleviate many hours of despondency. But above all, an instinctive love of liberty, such as was felt by the Spartan when he compared it to the sun, the most brilliant, and at the same time, the most useful object in creation, cherished in the

Englishman by the traditions of centuries of struggle in its achievement and defence, cause him to echo the sentiment of his own poet,

“Bondage is winter, darkness, death, despair,
Freedom, the sun, the sea, the mountains
and the air.”

I fully subscribe to an opinion which has been expressed by an accomplished Southern writer, that an attempt to enslave the English labourer would equal, though it could not exceed in folly, an attempt to liberate the American slave—either seriously attempted and with sufficient power to oppose the natural current of events would overwhelm the civilization of the continent in which it occurred in anarchy. But if the English labourer belonged to a different race from his employer; if they were separated by a moral and intellectual disparity such as divides the Southern slave from his master: if instead of the sentiments and traditions of liberty which would make bondage worse than death, he had the gentle, tractable and submissive temper that adapt the African to servitude, who can doubt that a slavery which would insure comfort and kindness, would improve his condition in all its aspects?

None of the circumstances which prevent the application of the general proposition we have been discussing to the English labourer, extend to the American slave—none of the plans which have been suggested for the relief of the former would offer any hope of amelioration to the latter. No man who knows anything of the negro character, can for a moment suppose that the land of the country, could be distributed between them as tenant proprietors. If it was given to them to day, their improvidence would make it the property of the white man to-morrow. Indeed the fact to which Mr. Webster called attention, that the products of the slave-holding States are destined mainly, not for immediate consumption, but for purposes of manufacture and commercial exchange, exclude the possibility of an extended system of tenant proprietorship, and render cultivation and disposal by

capital upon a large scale indispensable. The black man if emancipated must work for hire. Would he be better able to hold his own against the capitalist than the English labourer? Would not the misery and degradation of the latter, but faintly foreshadow the doom of the emancipated slave? His days embittered and shortened by privation; cheered by no hope of a brighter future: the burthens of liberty without its privileges; the degradation of bondage without its compensations; "the name of freedom graven on a heavier chain;" his root in the grave, the liberated negro under the influence of moral causes as irresistible as the laws of gravity, would moulder earthward. What is there, may I not ask, in the misery and desolation of this collective servitude, to compensate for the sympathy, kindness, comfort, and protection which so generally solace the suffering, and sweeten the toil, and make tranquil the slumber, and contented the spirits of the slave, whose lot has been cast in the sheltering bosom of a Southern home?

The approximation to equality in numbers, which has been hastily supposed to render emancipation safer than in the West Indies, would give rise to our greatest danger. It will not be long before the unmixed white population of the West Indies will be reduced, by the combined influences of emigration and amalgamation, to a few factors in the sea ports. In the United States, not only would the exodus of either race, or their fusion, be impracticable, but the pride of civilization, which now stoops with alacrity to bind up the wounds of the slave, would spurn the aspiring contact of the free man. The points of sympathy between master and slave may not be as numerous or powerful as we could desire, but between the white and the black man, in any society in which they are recognised as equals, and in which the latter are sufficiently numerous to create apprehension as to the consequences of distrust and aversion, a growing ill-will would deepen into irreconcilable animosity. Look at the isolation in which, notwithstanding their insignificance as a class, the free blacks of the

North now live. "The negro," says De Tocqueville, "is free, but he can share neither the rights, nor the pleasures, nor the labour, nor the affections, nor the altar, nor the tomb of him whose equal he has been declared to be. He meets the white man upon fair terms, neither in life nor in death." What could be expected from a downtrodden race, existing in masses large enough to be formidable, in whose bosoms the law itself nourished a sense of injustice by proclaiming an equality which Nature and society alike denied, with passions unrestrained by any stake in the public peace, or any bonds of attachment to the superior class, but that it should seek in some frenzy of despair, to shake off its doom of misery and degradation? Would not the atrocities which have always distinguished a war of races, be perpetrated on a grander and more appalling scale than the world has ever yet witnessed? The recollections of hereditary feud alone have, in every age, so inflamed the angry passions of our nature as to lend a deeper gloom even to the horrors of war. When the poet describes the master of the lyre, as seeking to rouse the martial ardour of the Grecian conqueror and his attendant nobles, he brings before them the ghosts of their Grecian ancestors that were left unburied on the plains of Troy, who tossing their lighted torches—

"Point to the Persian abodes,
And glittering temples of their hostile gods."

But what would be the ferocity awakened in half-savage bosoms, when embittered memories of long-descended hate towards a superior race, exasperated by the maddening pangs of want, impelled them to seek retribution for centuries of imaginary wrong? Either that precious harvest of civilization which has been slowly ripening under the toils of successive generations of our fathers, and the genial sunshine and refreshing showers of centuries of kindly Providence, would be gathered by the rude sons of spoil, or peace would return after a tragedy of crime and sorrow, with whose burthen of

woe the voice of history would be tremulous through long ages of after time.

The whole reasoning of modern philanthropy upon this subject has been vitiated, by its overlooking those fundamental moral differences between the races, which constitute a far more important element in the political arrangements of society, than relative intellectual power. It is immaterial how these differences have been created. Their existence is certain; and if capable of removal at all, they are yet likely to endure for such an indefinite period, that in the consideration of any practical problem, we must regard them as permanent. The collective superiority of a race can no more exempt it from the obligations of justice and mercy, than the personal superiority of an individual; but where unequal races are compelled to live together, a sober and intelligent estimate of their several aptitudes and capacities must form the basis of their social and political organization. The intellectual weakness of the black man is not so characteristic, as the moral qualities which distinguish him from his white brother. The warmest friends of emancipation, amongst others the late Dr. Channing, have acknowledged that the civilization of the African, must present a different type from that of the Caucasian, and resemble more the development of the East than the West. His nature is made up of the gentler elements. Docile, affectionate, light-hearted, facile to impression, reverential, he is disposed to look without for strength and direction. In the courage that rises with danger, in the energy that would prove a consuming fire to its possessor, if it found no object upon which to spend its strength, in the proud aspiring temper which would render slavery intolerable, he is far inferior to other races. Hence, subordination is as congenial to his moral, as a warm latitude is to his physical nature. Freedom is not "chartered on his manly brow" as on that of the native Indian. Unkindness awakens resentment, but servitude alone carries no sense of degradation fatal to self respect. A civilization like our own could be developed only by a free people;

but under a system of slavery to a superior race, which was ameliorated by the charities of our religion, the African is capable of making indefinite progress. He is not animated by that love of liberty which Bacon quaintly compared to a spark that ever flieth in the face of him who seeketh to trample it under foot. The masses of the old world, under various forms of slavery, have exhibited a standing discontent, and their struggles for freedom have been the flashes of a smothered but deeply hidden fire. The obedience of the African, unless disturbed by some impulse from without, and to which he yields only in a vague hope of obtaining respite from labour, is willing and cheerful. De Toçqueville, in his work on the French Revolution, points out a difference between nations, in what he calls the sublime taste for freedom—some seeking it for its material blessings only, others for its intrinsic attractions; and adds, "that he who seeks freedom for anything else than freedom's self, is made to be a slave." How fallacious must be any political induction which transfers to the African that love of personal liberty, which wells from the heart of our own race in a spring-tide of passionate devotion, the winters of despotism could never chill. The Providence which appointed the Anglo-Saxon to lead the van of human progress fitted him for his mission, by preconfiguring his soul to the influences of freedom. This sentiment is indestructible in his nature. It would survive the degradation of any form or term of bondage. Like the sea shell, when torn from its home in the deep, his heart, through all the ages of slavery, would be vocal with the music of his native liberty.

The strength of that security against oppression which the Southern slave derives from the selfishness of human nature, has never been sufficiently appreciated, for in truth, it has existed in connection with no other form of servitude. With exceptions too slight to deserve remark, in Greece and Rome, in the British and Spanish colonies, it was cheaper to buy slaves than to raise them, to work them to death, than to provide for them

in life. Hence in Rome, the slaves of the public were better cared for than those of the individual. With us, the master has a large and immediate interest, not only in the life, but the health, comfort and improvement of his slave, for they all add to his value and efficiency as a labourer. Southern slavery must therefore be tried upon its own merits, and not by data true or false, collected from other forms of servitude. Arithmetic, Gibbon once said, is the natural enemy of rhetoric, and a single statement will suffice to discredit all the reasoning, and pour contempt upon all the declamation which has confounded our slavery with that of the British West Indies. From the most reliable calculations that can be made, says Carey, in his *Essay on the Slave Trade*, it appears that for every African imported into the United States, ten are now to be found, such has been the wonderful growth of population; for every three imported into the British West Indies, only one now exists, such has been its frightful decline. But however ample this protection may be to the slave from the oppression of strangers, his own passions it is urged, will lead the master to spurn the restraints of interest. But what security against an abuse of power, has human wisdom ever devised which is likely to operate with such uniform and prevailing force? As Burke said of another social institution, "it makes our weakness subservient to our virtue, and grafts our benevolence, even upon our avarice." All the evidence which is accessible, the statistics of population, of consumption as shown both by imports, and the balance between production and exports, and the testimony of intelligent and candid travellers bear witness to its general efficiency. And it is to be remarked that whilst the slave partakes largely and immediately of his master's prosperity; the reverses which reduce the latter to beggary or starvation, pass almost harmless over his head. In other countries, the pressure of every public calamity falls upon the working classes: but with us the slave is placed in a great measure beyond their reach, by the circumstance that his hire or ownership im-

port a condition of life in which the means of subsistence are enjoyed. From the demoralization of extreme want, so fatal to virtue as well as happiness in other lands, he is thus always saved. It was the benevolent wish of Henry the Fourth of France, that every peasant in his dominions might have a fowl in his pot for Sunday. In every age the patriot has offered a similar prayer for the labouring poor of his country. But it is only in the Southern States of our confederacy, that the sun ever beheld a meal of wholesome and abundant food, the daily reward of the children of toil.

The relation is so far from having any tendency to provoke those angry and resentful feelings which would excite the master to acts of cruelty, that its tendency is directly the reverse.

It was truly said by Legaré, that *parcere subjectis*, was not exclusively a Roman virtue: that it was a law of the heart, the usual attribute of undisputed power; and that there were few men who did not feel the force of that beautiful and touching appeal: "Behold, behold, I am thy servant." It was owing to this principle that when the dependence of the feudal vassal upon his lord was most complete, their mutual attachment, (as we are assured by Gilbert Stewart and other historians of this period,) was strongest, and as the feudal tenure decayed, and the law was interposed between them, the kindness upon one side and the affection and gratitude upon the other disappeared. It is not simply the consciousness of strength which tends to disarm resentment in the bosom of the master. It is the long and intimate association, connected with the feelings of interest awakened in all but the hardest hearts by the cares and responsibilities of guardianship which make the slave an object of friendly regard, and bring him within that circle of kindly sympathies which cluster around the domestic hearth. It is a form of that generous feeling which bound the Highland chieftain to his clan, and which, with greater or less force, depending upon the virtue of the age, attaches to every relation of patriarchal authority. According to Dr. Ar-

nold, (in his tract on the Social condition of the Operative Classes,) the old system of English slavery was far kinder than that now existing in England of hired service. The affection between the master and the villain is shown by the fact that villainage "wore out" by voluntary manumission—a circumstance which never would have happened had the relation been one simply of profit and loss. Shakspeare in his character of old Adam, in "As You Like It," has adverted to the more genial and kindly elements which distinguished this legal service from that for wages. Orlando, in replying to the pressing entreaty of the old servant to go with him, and "do the service of a younger man in all his business and necessities," says—

"Oh good old man, how well in thee appears

The constant service of the antique world,
When service sweat for duty—not for
meed."

The mutual good will of distinct classes has, in all ages, been dependent upon a well defined subordination. This opinion is confirmed by the testimony of one of the most eloquent writers of New England, in reference to the workings of its social system as they fell under his personal observation. I appeal, says Dana in his *Essay on Law as suited to Man*, "to those who remember the state of our domestic relations, when the old Scriptural terms of master and servant were in use. I do not fear contradiction when I say there was more of mutual good will then than now: more of trust on the one side and fidelity on the other; more of protection and kind care, and more of gratitude and affectionate respect in return; and because each understood well his place, actually more of a certain freedom, tempered by gentleness and by deference. From the very fact that the distinction of classes was more marked, the bond between the individuals constituting these two, was closer. As a general truth, I verily believe that, with the exception of near-blood relationships, and here and there peculiar friendships, the attachment of master and servant was

closer and more enduring than that of almost any other connection in life. The young of this day, under a change of fortune, will hardly live to see the eye of an old, faithful servant fill at their fall; nor will the old domestic be longer housed and warmed by the fireside of his master's child, or be followed by him to the grave. The blessed sun of those good old days has gone down, it may be for ever, and it is very cold." It is through the operation of these kindly sentiments, which it awakens on both sides, that African slavery reconciles the antagonism of classes that has elsewhere reduced the highest statesmanship to the verge of despair, and becomes the great Peace-maker of our society, converting inequalities, which are sources of danger and discord in other lands, into pledges of reciprocal service, and bonds of mutual and intimate friendship.

But a vigilant and restraining public opinion surrounds our slaves with a cumulative security. The master is no chartered libertine. Custom, the greatest of law-givers, places visible metes and bounds upon his authority which few are so hardy as to transcend. Native humanity and Christian principle inscribe their limitations upon the living tables of his heart. A public sentiment, growing in its strength and increasing in its exactions, covers the slave with a protecting shield, far less easily or frequently broken through, than those feeble barriers of law which in our Free States, are interposed between the degraded and outcast black man, and his white brother. Written laws never to be received as accurate exponents of the rights and privileges of a people, are most fallacious when appealed to as a standard, by which to determine the character of a system of slavery; for the wisest and most humane must acknowledge that the introduction of law may so disturb the harmony and good will of any domestic relation, as to breed more mischief than it can possibly cure. It is not simply in reference to the food, clothing, work, holydays, punishments of slaves, that public sentiment exercises its supervision and restraint. It looks to the whole range of their happiness and im-

provement. It is operating with great force in inducing masters to provide more extended facilities for their religious instruction. It has to a large extent terminated that disruption of family ties, which has always constituted the most serious obstacle to the improvement of the slave, and the severest hardship of his lot. A Scotch weaver, William Thompson, who travelled through our Southern States in 1843, on foot, sustaining himself by manual labour, and mixing constantly with our slave population, states in a book which he published on his return home, that the separation of families did not take place here to such an extent as amongst the labouring poor of Scotland. We know that the evil has been diminishing with every succeeding day, and I trust that public sentiment will not leave this most beneficent work half done. The sanctity and integrity of the family union is the germ of all civilization. There is nothing in slavery to make its violation inevitable. It may require some time and sacrifice to accommodate the habits of society to the universal prevalence of a permanent tenure in these relations. But through the agency of public sentiment alone, acting upon buyer and seller, and operating where necessary through combinations of benevolent neighbours, the mischief in its entire dimensions lies within the grasp of remedy.

Slavery is charged with fixing a point in the scale of civilization, beyond which it does not permit the labourer to rise. God, it is argued, has conferred the capacity and imposed the duty of improvement, but man forever denies the opportunity. I admit that the refining, elevating, and liberalizing influences of knowledge can not be imparted to the slave, in an equal degree with his master. But this arises from the fact that he is a labourer, not that he is a slave. It proceeds from a combination of circumstances which human laws could not alter, and which render daily toil the unavoidable portion of the black man. Civilization is a complex result, demanding a multitude of special offices and functions, for whose performance men are fitted, and even reconciled by gradations in intelligence

and culture. However exalting or ennobling might be the knowledge of Newton or Herschell, God in his Providence has denied to the larger part of the human family, the opportunity of obtaining it. The apparent hardship of this arrangement disappears when we reflect that this life is only a school of discipline and probation for another, and that a variety of condition involving distinct spheres of duty, may be the wisest and most merciful provision for each. Every age rises to a higher level of general intelligence, but the mass of men must be satisfied with that prime wisdom, "to know that before us lies in daily life." Whilst I doubt not that,

"Through the ages one increasing purpose runs,
And the thoughts of men are widened with
the circuit of the suns,"

yet so long as the Divine ordinance, the poor ye have always with you, remains unrepealed—an ordinance without which the fruits of industry would be consumed, and its accumulations cease, the classes of society must be divided by a broad line of disparity in intellectual culture. Emancipation would not relieve the slave from the necessities of daily labour, or furnish the leisure for extended mental cultivation. There might be individual exceptions; but all legislation must take its rule from the general course of human nature, not its accidental departures and variations. It is emancipation and not servitude, which would forever darken and extinguish those prospects of amelioration that now lie imaged in the bright perspective of Christian hope. The slave will partake more and more of the life-giving civilization of the master. As it is, his intimate relations with the superior race, and the unsystematic instruction he receives in the family, have placed him in point of general intelligence above a large portion of the white labourers of Europe. It appears from the most recent statistics, that one half the adult population of England and Wales are unable to write their names. It was of English

labourers, not American slaves, that Gray wrote those touching lines—

“But knowledge to their eyes her ample
page,
Rich with the spoils of time, did ne'er un-
roll ;
Chill penury repressed their noble rage,
And froze the genial current of the soul.”

But it is supposed that our slaves can never be instructed without danger to the public safety, as knowledge, like the admission of light into a subterranean mine, might lead to an explosion. There may be circumstances in which the supreme law of self-preservation will command us to withhold from the slave the degree of information, we would gladly impart. But it is never to be forgotten, that this stern and inexorable necessity will not be created by the system itself. The sin, and the responsibility of its existence will lie at the door of the misjudging philanthropy which has rashly and ignorantly interposed to adjust relations on whose balance hang great issues of liberty and civilization. If the views which have been presented are true, the more his reason was instructed, the clearer would be the slave's perception of the general equity of the arrangement which fixed his lot. But if knowledge is to introduce him to a literature which will confuse his understanding by its sophistry, whilst it inflames his passions by its appeals, which will exaggerate his rights and magnify his wrongs, then mercy to the slave, as well as justice to society require us to protect him from the folly and crime into which he might be hurried by the madness of moral intoxication. We will not throw open our gates, that the enemies of peace may sow the dragon's teeth of discord, and leave us to reap a harvest of confusion and rebellion—but when they come to plant love amongst us, to teach apostolic precepts, as elementary morality, and to hold up the standard of Holy Scripture as the rule of conduct, and proof of law, we will give them hospitable welcome.

If I have at all comprehended the elements which should enter into the deter-

mination of this momentous problem of social welfare and public authority, the existence of African Slavery amongst us, furnishes no just occasion for self-reproach; much less for the presumptuous rebuke of our fellow man. As individuals, we have cause to humble ourselves before God, for the imperfect discharge of our duties in this, and in every other relation of life: but for its justice and morality as an element of our social polity, we may confidently appeal to those future ages, which, when the bedimming mists of passion and prejudice have vanished, will examine it in the pure light of truth, and pronounce the final sentence of impartial History. Beyond our own borders, there has been no sober and intelligent estimate of its distinctive features; no just apprehension of the nature, extent and permanence of the disparities between the races, or of the fatal consequences to the slave, of a freedom which would expose him to the unchecked selfishness of a superior civilization; no conception approaching to the reality of the power which has been exerted by a public sentiment, springing from Christian principle, and sustained by the universal instincts of self-interest, in tempering the severity of its restraints, and impressing upon it the mild character of a patriarchal relation; no rational anticipation of the improvement of which the negro would be capable under our form of servitude, if those who now nurse the wild and mischievous dream of peaceful emancipation, should lend all their energies to the maintenance of the only social system under which his progressive amelioration appears possible. African slavery is no relic of barbarism to which we cling from the ascendancy of semi-civilized tastes, habits, and principles; but an adjustment of the social and political relations of the races, consistent with the purest justice, commended by the highest expediency, and sanctioned by a comprehensive and enlightened humanity. It has no doubt been sometimes abused by the base and wicked passions of our fallen nature to purposes of cruelty and wrong; but where is the school of civilization from which the stern and wholesome discipline of suf-

fering has been banished? or the human landscape not saddened by a dark-flowing stream of sorrow? Its history when fairly written, will be its ample vindication. It has weaned a race of savages from superstition and idolatry, imparted to them a general knowledge of the precepts of the true religion, implanted in their bosoms sentiments of humanity and principles of virtue, developed a taste for the arts and enjoyments of civilized life, given an unknown dignity and elevation to their type of physical, moral and intellectual man, and for the two centuries during which this humanizing process has taken place, made for their subsistence and comfort, a more bountiful provision, than was ever before enjoyed in any age or country of the world by a labouring class. If tried by the test which we apply to other institutions, the whole sum of its results, there is no agency of civilization which has accomplished so much in the same time, for the happiness and advancement of our race.

I am fully persuaded, Mr. President, that the preservation of our peace and union, our property and liberty depend upon the triumph of these opinions over the delusion and ignorance which have obscured and perplexed the public judgment upon this question of slavery. I believe that they indicate the only tenable line of argument along which we can defend our rights or character. So long as men regard all forms of slavery as sinful, they will be conducted to the conclusion that any aid or comfort to them, is likewise sinful, by a logical necessity, which their passions or interests can only resist for a time. The conviction that justice is the highest expediency for the statesman, the first duty of the Christian, and should be the supreme law of the State, will sooner or later establish its supremacy over all combinations of parties and interests. So long as our fellow-citizens of the North look upon this relation as barbarous and corrupting, they must and ought to desire and seek its extinction, as a great vice and crime. Every year will deepen their sympathy with the slave, suffering under unjust bonds, and inflame their resentful indignation

towards the master who holds his odious property with unrelaxing grasp. Mutual self-respect is the only term of association upon which either individuals or societies can or ought to live together. How long could our Union endure, if it was to be preserved by submission to a fixed policy of injustice, and acquiescence under an accumulating burthen of reproach? We are willing to give much for Union. We will give territory for it; the broad acres we have already surrendered would make an empire. We will give blood for it; we have shed it freely upon every field of our country's danger and renown. We will give love for it; the confiding, the forgiving, the overflowing love of brothers and freemen. But much as we value it, we will not purchase it at the price of liberty or character. A union of suspicion, aversion, injustice, in which we would be banned not blessed, outlawed not protected, whether by faction under the forms of law or revolution over them I care not, has no charms for me. The Union I love, is that which our fathers formed; a Union which, when it took its place upon the majestic theatre of history, consecrated by the benedictions of patriots and freemen, and covered all over with images of fame, was a fellowship of equal and fraternal States; a Union which was established not only as a bond of strength, but as a pledge of justice and a sacrament of affection; a Union which was intended like the arch of the heavens to embrace within the span of its beneficent influence all interests and sections and to rest oppressively or unequally upon none; a Union in which the North and the South—"like the double celled heart, at every full stroke," beat the pulses of a common liberty and a common glory. Mr. Madison has recorded a beautiful incident, which occurring as the members of the Federal Convention, were attaching their signatures to the Constitution, forms a fitting and significant close to its proceedings. Dr. Franklin pointing to the painting of a sun which hung behind the speaker's chair, and adverting to a difficulty which is said to exist in discriminating between the picture of a rising

and a setting sun, remarked that during the progress of their deliberations, he had often looked at this painting and been doubtful as to its character, but that he now saw clearly it was a rising sun. When the fancy of Franklin gave to the painting its auroral hues, she had dipped her pencil in his heart. Let but a healing conviction of the true character of our system of slavery enter into the public sentiment of the North: let it understand that the South is seeking to discharge, not simply the obligations of justice, but the larger debt of Christian humanity towards this degraded race; and that if it has not accomplished more, it is because its people like the workmen upon Solomon's temple, have been compelled to labour on their social fabric with the trowel in one hand, and the sword in the other: and the old feelings of mutual regard would soon follow a mutual respect resting upon immovable foundations; the animosities and dissensions of the Past would be buried in the duties of the Present and the Hopes of the Future; the memories of our great heroic age would breathe over us a second spring of patriotism: the comprehensive American sentiment which framed this league of love would revive in all its quickening power, in the bosoms of our people, spreading undivided over every portion of our territory, and operating unspent through all generations of our history; the Union would be so clasped

in the North, and in the South, to our heart of hearts, that death itself could not tear loose the clinging tendrils of devotion; and that emblematic painting in which our fathers, with "no form nor feeling in their souls, unborrowed from their country," greeted with patriot prayer and hope, the rising beams of morning, would never by any line of lessening light, betoken to the eyes of their children a parting radiance.

I have an abiding faith in Time, Truth and Providence. Let but the educated mind of our society be fully awakened to the magnitude of its responsibilities, and thoroughly instructed in the duties of its mission: let it meet the falsifications of history, and perversions of philosophy, and corruptions of religion, in the varied forms of wise and temperate discussion; let it catch the spirit of Milton, when he was content to lose his sight in writing for the defence of the liberties of England, and inspired by yet deeper enthusiasm in a cause upon which may depend the liberties and civilization of the whole earth, now in common peril from a universal licentiousness of opinion, unseal all its fountains of wit, eloquence and logic; and there would soon set out from our Southern coast, a great moral Gulf Stream, able to penetrate and warm all currents of opposing thought—although they come in the strength and volume of ocean tides.

NOTE.—This Address at the time of its delivery had not been entirely committed to writing. The author has sometimes found it impossible to recall the exact language which was then employed. He has, also, after conference with some members of the Executive Committee of the State Agricultural Society, added an occasional statement and illustration, which the limits of the oral discourse obliged him to omit.

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